

THAYER, T. M.



# THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

1230 YORK AVENUE · NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10021

THE PRESIDENT

September 8, 1978

Ms. Theodora M. Thayer  
Associate Coordinator  
Office of Postsecondary Research,  
Information Systems and Institutional Aid  
New York State Education Department  
99 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12230

Dear Ms. Thayer:

On behalf of The Rockefeller University I submit this letter as our 1978 Progress Report under the Statewide Plan for the Future of Postsecondary Education. We apologize for being late with the formal narrative response. Several months ago, we submitted the key data that were requested, and this letter includes an update of that submission. In this letter we aim to answer each of the major points outlined in the June 1977 Regents Bulletin regarding the 1978 Progress Report. Many points in the Bulletin do not relate to our specialized institution.

Since I have just arrived on the campus -- having assumed office on July 1 this summer -- this Report mainly reflects the work of my new senior colleagues here. During recent weeks I reviewed carefully the draft materials for this Report, and I am satisfied that the University's policies and practices are stated fully and accurately. In the future, I will be even more actively involved in the policy issues that the Regents have been addressing.

## Part I: Reassessment of 7 areas in 1976 Report

There have been no major changes in the central mission of The Rockefeller University. Our mission continues to center on research and advanced (doctoral and postdoctoral) training in the biological, biomedical, behavioral, and related sciences. The University is a specialized research-intensive institution, as reaffirmed in former President Seitz's last annual reports for 1976-77 and 1977-78 (copies enclosed).

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The total number of Ph.D. candidates, as outlined more fully below, continues at a level of about 100. There is no undergraduate training. Extremely high standards are maintained for admission to our doctoral program, and we have experienced a consistently high acceptance rate and an extremely low dropout rate. A report for 1977-78 on the Graduate Program is attached, along with an excerpt from our catalogue regarding our educational philosophy.

The only substantial change in our academic programs during the past two years has been the closing of a small group in philosophy. This effort was phased out in response to University-wide financial stringency and a renewed focus on our basic mission of research in the biomedical sciences. Four tenured members of the philosophy faculty resigned to accept comparable positions at other leading institutions in the U.S.

Limited expansion of special postdoctoral training has been achieved through private funding. For example, a new program for up to ten young post-M.D. clinical investigators has been launched, with a combination of institutional and external support. Another, small new postdoctoral program concerns a University-wide effort to recruit extremely gifted young investigators at the assistant professor level, who are given an unusual measure of independence in establishing their research careers; this program also has been funded entirely from external private sources.

No major changes are contemplated in the University's utilization of existing facilities, and no new construction has been planned. Modernization and renovation projects have continued in order to upgrade facilities for modern requirements of research. As noted in Vice President Nichols' letter to you of March 18, 1977, a new library/computer center might be planned for the 1980s; ad hoc faculty committees will be exploring these needs during the next few years. There have been some significant changes in the University's real estate holdings in our immediate neighborhood; but these do not directly affect the academic and research programs of our institution.

Research remains the highest priority on the campus, and programs are thriving with increasing support from both public and private sources. There is a continuing

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reconnaissance about new scientific opportunities through meetings of the faculty, administrative staff, president, and trustees. For example, areas of the neurosciences are being emphasized, as outlined in the attached private planning paper prepared about 18 months ago.

Public service continues to be a strong interest of many members of our faculty and senior officers. This is reflected in their assignments on advisory committees to many agencies of the Federal government, and in substantial efforts with other private organizations concerned with science and public policy, particularly in the biomedical fields.

Two new developments at the University are: (a) my election as President to succeed Frederick Seitz, who retired on June 30, 1978; and (b) the restoration of a balanced operating budget for FY1978. The official announcement of former President Seitz's retirement and my election is enclosed. Financial reports for FY1978 will be published shortly; current data are available at any time.

## Part II: Commentary on 5 Major Goals

As Mr. Nichols outlined in the University's March 1977 letter, our institution has established a clear record during the past 25 years in providing quality doctoral education in the sciences. We have noted the results of a study in 1975, carried out by the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council, in which The Rockefeller University's alumni during the period from 1958 through 1970 were ranked #1 in the United States.

Continuing self-assessment and stern quality controls are carried out through committees of our senior and junior faculty, as well as through the many independent scholars throughout the country who evaluate the qualifications of applicants to our highly selective Ph.D. program. Every special review of a particular field here -- such as the evaluation of mathematics, carried out under the auspices of the Regents in 1975-76 -- has confirmed the unusually high caliber of our small program.

Cooperation with other institutions on educational projects is usually on ad hoc basis, such as in short

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courses, seminars or symposia. One exception is the continuing collaboration with Cornell Medical College (our neighbor) in a joint M.D./Ph.D. program in which students spend six to seven years earning a Ph.D. at Rockefeller and an M.D. at Cornell. This program began in 1972 and has been extremely successful to date.

Our institution has operated historically at a low tenure ratio -- about 20% if all full-time postdoctoral associates are included, and about 40% if they are excluded. The basic issues of promotion and tenure are therefore embedded in the University's functional role within American scientific life. Owing to financial and space limitations, as well as a considered policy of maintaining our scientific community at about its present size, we make only one or two promotions or appointments to tenure each year. Guidelines for the necessarily stiff competition are discussed amply with all ranks of the junior faculty so as to avert the problems of misplaced, unrealistic expectations. This group does understand that, with rare exceptions, their academic careers must (and usually do) reach their culmination at other, less specialized institutions. In fact, our extended postdoctoral "alumni" have achieved preeminent roles at medical schools and universities throughout the world.

Limited progress has been made in recruiting qualified women and members of minority groups for tenured faculty and senior administrative positions. The University is keenly conscious of its responsibilities in an area that is made more complicated by the paucity of new openings; the situation is under continuing review. Several women occupy highly responsible administrative positions, including the Administrator of the ERISA program and the Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

Our library is organized to serve research purposes and is adequate at the moment. As noted earlier, we are evaluating options for construction during the next decade of a library/computer center. Our Ph.D. students use the library heavily, of course, and generally find it satisfactory. The library is also used by those neighboring institutions that carry out major scientific programs.

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I am especially interested in exploring during the next year (my first year in office) new ways in which the University can collaborate even more closely with (a) our immediate neighbors, (b) institutions in the New York City area, and (c) regional/national collaborations of various kinds. Current possibilities for extension of ongoing efforts include clinical research, tropical medicine, the neurosciences, computing and library services, and animal resources.

The University has experienced no substantial difficulty in the placement of doctoral graduates. Because our selection process is highly individualized and our program small, Ph.D. students receive essentially continuous counseling on their likely careers in research. As the enclosed directory of alumni shows, our graduates tend to work in academic research and have advanced rather quickly through the ranks to assume positions of leadership. We are proud to note that two of our roughly 300 alumni have won the Nobel Prize. In general, we believe that our alumni are serving social needs through careers in the leading edge of research in the life sciences.

As noted in our recent letters and as mentioned above, we do not anticipate any major new construction during the next few years. We continue to reassess various needs for new facilities, although our needs relate primarily to our research mission rather than to any changes in estimated enrollment. We anticipate no change in the continuing level of roughly 100 Ph.D. students.

Major modernization and renovation projects -- at a level of about \$600,000 per year, which represents about 1.5% of the current annual operating budget -- are required to sustain the quality and productivity of our laboratories. Each project is reviewed carefully and approved by the President and the Board of Trustees.

Some sharing of facilities with neighboring institutions has been common, such as in the University's lease of space to neighbors desiring to use our new animal research center. We are now discussing other possibilities for sharing facilities with the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and the New York Hospital-Cornell University

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Medical College. Recent studies by special committees of our Board -- and by the President's office -- have reemphasized our interest in planning cooperative endeavors in order to use supporting resources most efficiently.

The University believes that the goal concerning freedom of access is particularly important. Since we charge no tuition and offer graduate students both a modest stipend and a subsidy for living expenses, we place no financial barriers in the way of candidates for graduate study.

Recruitment of women has been successful, and about 30% of each recent entering class of roughly 20 students is female.

Recruitment of minority students has been much less successful -- except for Asians and Asian/Americans, who are well-represented -- largely because comparatively few minority students (e.g., Blacks and Hispanics) elect to pursue graduate study in the biomedical sciences. Continuing consultations are held with a variety of national organizations and clearinghouses concerned with placement of minority group students. For example, we support and use the ETS Minority Locator Service which provides a computerized listing of all minority students planning to attend graduate school; each year we send directly to at least 100 of these candidates (in the sciences) a copy of our catalogue with the appropriate applications. Furthermore, we send about 1500 flyers on our Ph.D. program to the colleges in the U.S. and Canada that offer training in biology, psychology, physics, or chemistry. Finally, our general catalogue (copy enclosed) is distributed widely to institutions and individuals throughout the country, and members of our faculty are active in lecturing at many institutions. Through these patterns of communication, we aim to bring our small, highly selective program to the attention of qualified students.

Our main efforts regarding the freedom of choice goal are implemented through the scientific and medical communities concerned with preparing talented undergraduates for research careers. Thus, most of the recent applicants

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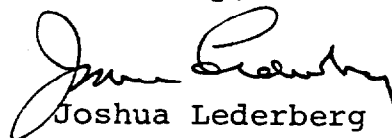
are "pre-screened" for us by the many faculty at the broad range of undergraduate institutions whom we keep well informed of our opportunities. Even so, we receive up to 350 applications each year for about 20 available places.

The Rockefeller University's Ph.D. program has been unconventional in offering very few formal courses. Instead, it relies almost entirely upon the student creating an independent pattern of study and research, using tutorials arranged with individual professors. This approach makes the best use of our high faculty-to-student ratio. The process is explained in our catalogue.

All of the appropriate supporting data -- in updated form -- have been provided on the enclosed sheets. Only the following Tables apply to our institution: 3, 4, 5b, 6, and 7.

We would be pleased to provide further information you may need. Vice President Nichols and I are ready to discuss points of policy that may need clarification. Mr. David Lyons, Controller, and one of his principal associates, Miss Janet Cocchiarella, are prepared to provide other data regarding demographic and financial trends at the University.

Sincerely,



Joshua Lederberg

Enclosures (complete list)

cc: Mr. Henri N. Lucey (N.Y. State Education Department)  
Mr. Patrick E. Haggerty (Chairman of University's Board)  
  
Miss Janet Cocchiarella  
Mr. David Lyons  
Mr. Rodney W. Nichols

bcc: Dr. Clarence M. Connelly  
Dean James Hirsch  
Mrs. Antonia Siddiqi